

Busworld Academy Congress 2016 Progressing towards 'smart' transportation for India

By Sarada Vishnubhatla



At the inaugural session of the Busworld Academy Congress 2016 are (from left) Mr. Bart De Groof, Consul General of Belgium; Mr. Oleg Kamberski, Head - Passenger Transport, IRU; Mr. Didier Ramoudt, President - Busworld International; Mr. Rajender Kumar Kataria, Managing Director, KSRTC, and Vice President, ASRTU; Mr. Prasanna Patwardhan, BOC President and Chairman & Managing Director, Prasanna Purple; Mr. Hakan Agnevali, President, Volvo Bus Corporation; Mr. Jan Deman, Director, Busworld Academy; and Mr. Rajam Sharma, Managing Director, Inter Ads Exhibitions Pvt. Ltd.

Themed 'Bus & Coach - A Smart Transportation System for India', Busworld Academy 2016 held a series of intense sessions wherein experts from the field reiterated that the crucial cogs in the wheel, literally, were the buses and the coaches which deserve to be made an integral part of the mobility chain.

The special factor this year was that Busworld Academy tied up with ASRTU and IRU Congress to address various issues ranging from 'Electromobility in India: Vision 2020 and Beyond', 'Bus Safety', 'Indian bus industry: Challenges and Opportunities', 'Efficient, Comfortable and Safer bus connectivity for

India' to 'Travel and tourism sector in India: Challenges and Opportunities'.

All these proved to be pertinent issues that were discussed in detail and a consensus was arrived at that these issues deserved sustainable solutions what with the Government foreseeing a tidal rise in the number of users of public transport by 2021.

Many road-blocks that need to be smoothened were also highlighted. Said Mr. Didier Ramoudt, President - Busworld International: "Providing a unique solution for public transport is a difficult issue because it is about economics and not always about logic. Plus, those making policy decisions live too far away from

the ground realities of public transport."

Several other pertinent issues like how to prevent congestion on roads caused by too many individual vehicles whether it is India or elsewhere, working towards zero or lower emissions, or even how to wean people away from cars to mass transport vehicles by incentivizing came up as a few major highlights of the sessions.

The ongoing issues that need to be sorted are rooted in long-standing problems. For example, most STUs in India do not have funds to invest in bettering or expanding their services. At the same time, movement of private buses is restricted. And so laments,

Mr. Prasanna Patwardhan, CMD - Prasanna Purple Mobility Solutions, and President - Bus Operators Confederation of India (BOCI): "Tourism is not growing in India because movement of vehicles is restricted. It has become 'car tourism' rather than 'bus tourism' because going by car has become cheaper than going by bus. This needs to change."

Mr. Jaspal Singh, Head - UITP India Office, shares his views: "The first thing that is needed is to open up the market. The second is to give private operators an access to the infrastructure like the existing bus terminals. China has turned bus terminals into business hubs where

there are shopping malls." He feels if the policies continue to treat private buses and coaches as separate entities then the sector will not grow. Counting buses and coaches as part of the mobility chain is a crucial step for any country. Shares Mr. Oleg Kamberski, Head - Passenger Transport, IRU: "Many people don't understand today that when we say collective door-to-door passenger transport, including the last mile, buses, coaches and taxis are part of the mobility chain because they are the ones which will be able to change in the quickest and most affordable way for authorities, because they are working on commercial basis. So if we succeed in integrating them well into our urban planning and mobility planning and by facilitating their services by integrating it into our legal framework, then of course the whole mobility chain will change." Mr. Kamberski emphasized that a national policy on sustainable transport is a must and must be made a priority, country no bar.

Going by the bus market trends in India for the next few years, as quoted by Mr. Chandramowli Kailasam, Team Leader - Commercial Vehicle Research, Mobility - Automotive & Transportation, Frost & Sullivan, India is dedicated to leap to the BS-VI level by April 2020 skipping one level. This step in turn will need its bus body fabrication rules to be stricter and ABS implemented compulsorily. It helps that complying with bus body codes by all body builders has been made mandatory from April 2016. While it is being predicted

VALUABLE OPINIONS

"The cheapest and the best smart transportation solutions cannot happen at the same time."
- Mr. Didier Ramoudt, President - Busworld International

"We are evolving towards multi-modal mobility and it's important for the sector in India as well to make sure that the bus industry gets its due place."
- Mr. Jan Deman, Director - Busworld Academy

"Without making transport efficient, cities cannot call themselves smart cities."
- Mr. Oleg Kamberski, Head - Passenger Transport, IRU

"Harmonising, at an international level, standards of comfort, quality and interior fittings of touring coaches is a crucial step."
- Ms. Sonila Metushi, Manager - Mobility of People & Taxis, IRU

"Much forex can be saved if we shift from cars to buses. A major road block is lack of infrastructure like bus terminals and footpaths."
- Mr. Prasanna Patwardhan, President - Bus Operators Confederation of India (BOCI)

"It is like a chicken and an egg story. Which will come first - the opening up of the sector or the modernization of the industry? I think both must go together."
- Mr. Jaspal Singh, Head - UITP India Office.

"There cannot be one technology that will have all answers. Different cities have different transport needs and even one big city has different needs."
- Mr. Emmanuel Juppert, Vice President - Volvo Bus Corporation

"Our vision is to establish state-of-art travel lounges with all modern facilities, besides bringing top-notch technologically-advanced vehicles with all latest equipments to the people."
- Mr. Mohammed A. Afzal, Owner - Parveen Travels

"Our guiding principle is the Avoid-Shift-Improve (ASI) Approach - AVOID or reduce the need and the distance to travel, through smart planning, SHIFT to more environmentally-friendly modes of transport, and IMPROVE the efficiency of transport modes and drive types."
- Mr. Manfred Breithaupt, Consultant - GIZ

"Accessibility to disabled people in bus lanes must be strictly implemented."
- Mr. Bart De Groof, Consul General of Belgium, Chennai

"We fail to bring about public transport for all."
- Mr. Rajender Kumar Kataria, MD - KSRTC

individual mode of transport to mass transport is star classification of buses and coaches. Advocating its implementation in India as well is Ms. Sonila Metushi, Manager - Mobility of People & Taxis, IRU: "Star classification is an international classification system for coaches replicating the model of the hotel industry. The industry can showcase the level of quality to the end users by displaying the difference between a four-star coach and one-star coach."

India has been looking at alternate fuel for its passenger vehicles, and championing the cause was

that demand for OE-built buses will be on the rise, it is also true that voices are being heard for dedicated bus lanes.

Mr. Jan Deman, Director - Busworld Academy, says: "If you talk about metro, tram or even train for long-distance travel, the biggest advantage that they have over buses is that they have got priority lines. So if we could have those priority lines for buses also, then we can lower the investment cost by half for the same service and introduce more buses."

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